

**MUNICIPAL SELF ASSESSMENT
MAURICE RIVER TOWNSHIP
CUMBERLAND COUNTY**

**Prepared for:
Maurice River Township**

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**MUNICIPAL SELF ASSESSMENT
MAURICE RIVER TOWNSHIP
CUMBERLAND COUNTY**

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INTRODUCTION

On February 2, 2000, pursuant to an application for Centers Designation, the State Planning Commission approved four (4) Village Centers and one (1) Hamlet within the Township of Maurice River. The State Plan identifies them as follows:

- Port Elizabeth-Bricksboro Village Center – Approved February 2, 2000
- Dorchester-Leesburg Village Center - Approved February 2, 2000
- Heislerville Village Center - Approved February 2, 2000
- Delmont Village Center - Approved February 2, 2000
- Mauricetown Station Hamlet – Approved February 2, 2000

As a “Designated” Center or Hamlet that reflects the efforts of the Township of Maurice River to petition to the State Planning Commission and receive official approval of each of the above referenced areas.

The designation of the State Centers and Hamlets is consistent with the Townships 2000 and 2006 Master Plan. The Master Plan in 2000 identified and recognized the various Village Centers and recommended implementing ordinances to create unique Village Center zoning. The Township having very little area of development, has historically maintained their village areas for commerce and residential concentrations of development.

The State Planning Rules under Subchapter 2, acknowledges that the current State Development and Redevelopment Plan “shall continue to constitute the official State Development and Redevelopment Plan until such time as it is revised and readopted by the State Planning Commission in accordance with the State Planning Act and N.J.A.C. 5:85-5.” {N.J.A.C. 5:85-2.1(b)} The current and applicable New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan was adopted March 1, 2001. This Plan lists in the Appendices {Appendix B. List of Centers page 287 of the NJSDRP} all Designated and Endorsed Centers. This list includes the Village Centers and Hamlet, listed above, which were Officially Designated and approved by the State Planning Commission on February 2, 2000. As such and in accordance with the State Planning Rules, the Township continues to request the maintenance of the officially Designated Centers through this process.

As part of the Plan Endorsement process the Township is seeking to maintain, to the maximum extent possible while recognizing the environmental features in each area, the previously Designated Village Centers and Hamlet. The Township is also seeking to enhance these areas by creating a Node along the Maurice River as a working riverfront. This area would recognize the historic shipbuilding community and importance of the local waterfront both for the surrounding area and the Region.

The Township submitted a letter to the Office for Planning Advocacy on January 22, 2020 to begin the Plan Endorsement Process. On March 18, 2021, the Township appointed a Plan Endorsement Advisory Committee by Resolution 59-2021. (See Appendix) Subsequently the Township has prepared this Municipal Self-Assessment Report which is an assessment of existing conditions and actions that have been taken over the past 5-10 years.

Local Goals and Objectives

The Township has continually valued its unique location and natural resources. This is apparent through the Goals and Objectives of the Master Plan. It is also apparent through the Township's continued efforts to protect the waterfront resources and industry and recognizing the long-established villages. In fact, the local Master Plan was prepared and adopted subsequent to the Township participating in the Centers Designation process, which preceded Plan Endorsement. The following Master Plan goals are consistent with the State Plan and the established Planning Areas.

- Economic Development Goal to Stimulate locally oriented economic development opportunities. More importantly the objectives under this goal includes using the Township's natural and cultural resources as a basis for sustainable economic development opportunities such as ecotourism. And to identify and make use of local economic benefits that can be derived from environmental protection and community development efforts.
- Community Development Goal to maintain and enhance the small-town atmosphere of the existing communities within the Township. Maurice River consists of several small towns and villages surrounded by large rural areas. The Township has created objectives to enhance the towns and villages and the unique rural areas.
- Housing Goal to provide housing opportunities in keeping with the existing community character. The Township's housing stock is primarily single-family, owner-occupied. There has been relatively small housing growth since the 1970's. The Township has created objectives to enhance their housing stock.
- Natural Resource Conservation goal to prevent the environmental degradation and to preserve open space, wildlife habitat, environmental quality and natural resources. The Township is rich with a diversity of natural environments. These include the Delaware Bayshore, the coastal marshes, the Wild and Scenic Maurice River and its tributaries, and the Pinelands forests. The majority of the Township is undeveloped. Recognizing the unique features and habitats in the community the following objectives have been created.
- Land Use and Development Patterns and the goal to guide future land use and development to remain compatible with the rural small-town atmospheres to prevent use of the Township.

Summary of Requested Planning Area and Center Boundary Changes

The Township of Maurice River is requesting that the existing centers as approved under the current New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan adopted March 1, 2001 and as officially designated in 2000, to remain substantially in effect. These Centers are historic Villages within the Township, existing as far back as the 1600's and account for **ONLY** 3.8% of the total Township land area. The Township has limited opportunities to provide services, new housing, and economic development anywhere outside of these designated Centers. Therefore, it is imperative to the Township that the areas be maintained consistent with the adopted and effective New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan.

The Office of Planning Advocacy has been working with the Township to create a Node along the Maurice River. The Node will incorporate the working waterfront and land uses that are located along the Maurice River. The waterfront provides the Township with opportunity to promote industry that requires waterfront access such as boat building, storage and other similar uses which have historically existed along the waterfront.

Waivers

The Township of Maurice River is requesting the following required items of Plan Endorsement be waived:

- The Township requests that a Community Visioning Process be part of the Action Plan.

EXISTING CONDITIONS/OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Local and Regional Context

Maurice River is the largest municipality located in Cumberland County, New Jersey. Incorporated in 1798, it consists of 94.7 square miles. Over 50% of the total land area in the Township is either State owned, in a Conservation program or publicly owned. Less than 2% of the land area is utilized for non-residential purposes and only 9% is residential. The Township contains portions of four designated Wild and Scenic rivers; the Maurice River, the Menantico River, the Manumuskin River, and the Muskee Creek. Residential development is primarily clustered in the Villages of Milmay, Cumberland, Delmont, Heislerville, Leesburg, Dorchester, Bricksboro and Port Elizabeth. Many of these villages predated the incorporation of Maurice River, dating back to the 1600's. Each of these Villages formed for different reasons related to local commerce on and proximity to the waterways.

Background

Maurice River is a quiet community extending from the mouth of the Maurice River (Delaware Bay) north into the heart of the Pinelands National Reserve. There are many unique and environmentally sensitive areas in the Township rich with history, scenic vistas and natural and environmental resources. The southern end of the Township contains various beaches including the areas in East Point, Thompson's Beach and Moores Beach. The only residential area remaining along the shore is on Bay Avenue in East Point. The buildings on Moores Beach and Thompson Beach have been lost in storms and reclamation efforts. Today State agencies and non-profit land conservation groups maintain and protect the shoreline, providing a habitat for a wide variety of birds and horseshoe crabs and other natural resources. The Township is working with these agencies to maintain the dike system that separates the Delaware Bay from the Maurice River and keeps the salt water from intruding into freshwater. The Township is also struggling to maintain the water related industries including shipbuilding and fishing that used to thrive in the area. Today many of the marinas and businesses have been acquired by NJDEP or lost and abandoned.

Shipbuilding was a predominate industry in the Dorchester and Leesburg areas where the A.J. Meerwald (the State Ship of New Jersey) was constructed. Today the shipbuilding yards have left with few remnants remaining such as Yank Marine in Dorchester and Allens Steel in Leesburg. Fishing was a predominate part of Heislerville where up until 1957 the oystering industry was popular. Today there are few marinas and fishing areas that remain along Matts Landing. The fisheries and related industries are no longer such a prominent part of the Township.

Over 50% of the Township land area is held in public ownership or permanently preserved. These areas provide opportunities for birding, fishing, hiking, bicycling, canoe and kayak areas, scenic vistas and much more. With all of these natural resources the Township is working to provide connections throughout the area with bike paths, walkways and trail systems. The Township contains part of the Bayshore Heritage Byway traveling down Main Street onto River Road and spurs to the East Point Lighthouse.

The challenge facing Maurice River Township is balancing its natural resources while serving the population within and traveling through the area. Population growth in the Township has declined by 12% over the past forty years (1980 population 3,643; 2010 population 3,184). The largest residential population growth occurred in the 1960's and 1970's. (The Township is home to two State prisons. The institutional population is included in the Township's Census of Population and accounts for almost 50% of the total population. The prison population does not accurately reflect the local conditions and should not be used in reviewing population growth over the past several decades.)

The Township is located on one of the main travel routes for shore bound traffic, connecting Cape May County to Route 55 and the Philadelphia area. In the 1990's County Route 347 was constructed as a bypass to State Highway Route 47 in an effort to divert the shore traffic off the local roadway. Route 347 bypassed Route 47 through Maurice River and relieved traffic congestion on the two-lane State highway. This had secondary and unintended impacts in the Community. Route 47 runs through the Township's Villages and commercial areas. While the shore traffic created an almost gridlock situation through the summer months, it also offered patrons to the local businesses and farm stands. With the construction of the Route 347 bypass not only has the gridlock situation on the state highway been reduced, the local businesses on Route 47 have not experienced the same level of customer volume.

Maurice River has been struggling to maintain its population and services. Attempts at new zoning opportunities have not succeeded in revitalizing the local community. The environmental resources that restrict future development potential are also part of what makes Maurice River unique in the region. Growth has occurred in surrounding communities and Maurice River is left with the secondary impacts of increased traffic and a loss of population and businesses.

Inventory of Key Characteristics

Located in Cumberland County, Maurice River contains an area of 60,911 acres or 95.17 square miles. The majority of the Township land area is either constrained or publicly owned, with very limited opportunities for industry and growth. A review of the US Census Bureau data creates a picture of the local conditions, however some of this data is flawed and therefore projections and estimates based on the data are misrepresentative of the local conditions. The US Census Bureau includes the prison population in their data.

The majority of the Township's population consists of institutionalized persons. This is a result of the prison population from both the Bayside State Prison and Southern State Correctional Facility located along Route 47 in the southern portion of the Township. In order to fully understand the population growth the institutionalized population needs to be excluded. This shows that the Township has had essentially no residential growth over the past 20 years with a decline of 84 persons since 1990. This is further reflected in the housing growth from 1990 through 2010, where only 94 new units were added to the housing stock over a twenty-year period. (*2020 data on institutionalized population is 3,034)

Population Growth With Prison Population			
	Maurice River Township	Cumberland County	New Jersey
1990	6,648	138,053	7,730,188
2000	6,928	146,438	8,414,350
2010	7,976	156,898	8,791,894
2020	6,218	154,152	9,288,994
1990-2000	4.2%	6.1%	8.9%
2000-2010	15.1%	7.1%	4.5%
2010-2020	-22.0%	1.8%	5.7%
Source: U.S. Census Bureau			

Residential and Institutional Population 1960-2020						
	Residential			Institutional		
	Population	Change		Population	Change	
		Population	Percentage		Population	Percentage
1960	3105			0		
1970	3455	350	11.3%	288	288	-
1980	3643	188	5.4%	934	646	224.3%
1990	3655	12	0.3%	2993	2059	220.4%
2000	3567	-88	-2.4%	3361	368	12.3%
2010	3571	4	0.1%	4405	1044	31.1%
2020	3184	-387	-10.8%	3034	-1371	31.1%
Source: U.S. Census Bureau						

The New Jersey Metropolitan Organization has prepared projections which are based on these flawed baseline numbers of population. They estimate a 2020 population of 8,200 persons and project from that figure. The base population of the Township is substantially less than those numbers projected by the Metropolitan Planning Organization and much less than shown in the US Census data.

NJ Metropolitan Planning Organization Population Projections Maurice River Township as of September 2019	
2020 ACTUAL POPULATION (after removing Prison Population)	3,184
2020	8,200
2025	8,400
2030	8,600
2035	8,700
2040	8,900

The US Census Bureau data further demonstrates the flaws in the actual population when you review the age and gender classifications. In 2018 estimates, the Township was 83% male, with the highest number of persons age 25-54. These figures clearly do not represent those persons living in the Township.

2000 - 2018 Population Profiles or Cohorts - Maurice River Township			
Age			
	2010	2018	2010 to 2018
< 5	190	54	-71.6%
5-14	429	262	-38.9%
15-24	593	377	-36.4%
25-34	2,124	2,154	1.4%
35-44	2,036	1,931	-5.2%
45-54	1,413	1,585	12.2%
55-64	631	690	9.4%
65+	560	651	16.3%
TOTAL	7,976	7,704	-3.4%
Median Age	38.1	39.7	4.2%
Source: US Census Data/American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2018)			

Population by Categories						
	Maurice River Township		Cumberland County		New Jersey	
	Persons	%	Persons	%	Persons	%
Total	7,704	100%	153,400	100%	8,960,161	100%
Sex						
F	1,273	16.5%	74,713	48.7%	4,587,840	51.5%
M	6,431	83.5%	78,687	51.3%	4,372,321	48.5%
Race						
White	4,011	52.1%	103,099	67.2%	6,085,474	72.6%
Black or African American	1,702	22.1%	29,573	19.3%	1,207,356	13.6%
Asian	17	0.2%	2,182	1.4%	844,105	5.7%
American Indian and Alaska Native	19	0.2%	1,136	0.7%	18,006	5.6%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	-	0.0%	14	0.0%	3,013	5.6%
Other	236	3.1%	10,815	7.1%	573,146	2.5%
Two or More Races	233	3.0%	6,581	4.3%	229,061	2.5%
Hispanic or Latino	657	8.5%	46,254	30.2%	1,764,520	13.3%
Age						
25-64	6,360	82.6%	81,586	53.2%	4,809,700	53.9%
65+	651	8.5%	22,325	14.6%	1,353,999	13.2%
Median Age	39.7	n/a	37.2	n/a	39.6	n/a
Source: US Census Data/American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2018)						

The Township has also seen a decline in their housing stock. From 2000 through 2020 the housing units have declined 1.2%. Some of this is due to environmental factors, and some due to age and condition. There is no source to fully explain the housing stock decline. The housing stock is primarily homeownership, family units in single family detached units. The Township housing stock is older, with 24% built prior to 1939, and only 7% built after the year 2000.

Housing Trends			
	Maurice River Township	Cumberland County	New Jersey
1990	1,412	50,294	3,075,310
2000	1,461	52,863	3,310,275
2010	1,506	55,406	3,553,562
2020	1,443	56,429	3,595,055
1990 to 2010	6.7%	10.2%	15.6%
1990 to 2000	3.5%	5.1%	7.6%
2000 to 2020	-1.2%	6.7%	8.6%
Source: US Census Data			

Maurice River Township Housing Units by Tenant and Occupancy Status, 2020						
Year Round Housing Units			Owner-occupied		Rental	
Occupied	Vacant	Total	No.	%	No.	%
1,257	186	1,443	1,125	89.5%	132	10.5%
Source: US Census Data 2020						

Summary of Household Characteristics - Maurice River Township		
	No. of Persons	% of Total
Family Households	683	68.71%
Non-Family Households	311	31.29%
Non-Family Households		
Living Alone	216	69.45%
Not Living Alone	95	30.55%
Family Households		
Married Couple	519	75.99%
Single Male	83	12.15%
Single Female	81	11.86%
Total Households	994	100%
Persons Per Household	2.5	N/A
Source: US Census Data/American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2018)		

Housing Units by Number of Units in Structure, Maurice River Township		
Number of Units	Units	Percent of Total
1-unit, Detached	853	85.81%
1-unit, Attached	58	5.84%
2 units	8	0.80%
3 or 4 units	-	0.00%
5 to 9 units	-	0.00%
10 to 19 units	-	0.00%
20 or more units	-	0.00%
Mobile Home	75	7.55%
Other	-	0.00%
Total	994	
Source: US Census Data/American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2018)		

Housing Units by Age		
Year Built	Units	Percent of Total
2014 or later	-	0.00%
2010 to 2013	-	0.00%
2000 to 2009	70	7.04%
1980 to 1999	243	24.45%
1960 to 1979	240	24.14%
1940 to 1959	204	20.52%
1939 or earlier	237	23.84%
Total	994	
Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2018)		

Occupied Housing Units by Number of Rooms		
Rooms	Housing Units	Percent of Total Housing Units
1	-	0.0%
2 or 3	36	3.6%
4 or 5	295	29.7%
6 or 7	433	43.6%
8+	230	23.1%
Total	994	100.0%
Median Rooms		
Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2018)		

Occupied Housing Units by Number of Bedrooms		
Bedrooms	Housing Units	Percent of Total Housing Units
No Bedrooms	-	0.0%
1-Bedroom	71	7.1%
2 or 3 Bedroom	846	85.1%
4 + Bedrooms	77	7.7%
Total	994	100.0%
Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2018)		

Housing Value, Owner-Occupied Units (with a mortgage)		
Value	Housing Units	Percent of Total Housing Units
Less than \$50,000	16	3.0%
\$50,000 to \$99,999	48	9.0%
\$100,000 to \$299,999	422	79.0%
\$300,000 to \$499,999	33	6.2%
\$500,000 to \$749,999	-	0.0%
\$750,000 to \$999,999	8	1.5%
\$1,000,000 or more	7	1.3%
Total	534	100.0%
Median Housing Value	\$ 158,400	
Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2018)		

There are limited opportunities for employment in the Township of Maurice River given the constrained lands and limited growth opportunities that exists. There is also a carryover from the population projections which reflects the counting of the prison population in the Census data, specifically the percent of the population that is not in the labor force is shown at 82.77%, clearly this includes the prisoners counted in the total population and is not reflective of the actual persons residing in Township housing.

MAURICE RIVER TOWNSHIP EMPLOYMENT STATUS		
	Total	Percent of Population 16 Years and Over
Population 16 years and Over	7,372	100%
In Labor Force	1,270	17.23%
Civilian Labor Force	1,270	100.00%
Employed	1,174	92.44%
Unemployed	96	7.56%
Armed Forces	0	0.00%
Not In Labor Force	6,102	82.77%
Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2018)		

The US Census Data Estimates from 2018 are substantially consistent with the New Jersey Labor Force Estimates. However, you can see from the New Jersey Metropolitan Planning Organization Employment Projections that the Township does not have enough jobs to employ its local labor force. And more concerning is the loss of employment projected through 2040.

NJ Annual Average Labor Force Estimates - 2018	
Labor Force	1,401
Employment	1,290
Unemployment	111
Unemployment Rate	7.9%

NJ Metropolitan Planning Organization Employment Projections Maurice River Township as of September 2019	
2020	906
2025	871
2030	840
2035	815
2040	794

Employment by Industry, Civilian Employed population 16 years and over		
Occupation	No. Persons	Percentage
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting, and Mining	7	0.60%
Construction	100	8.52%
Manufacturing	86	7.33%
Wholesale Trade	36	3.07%
Retail Trade	204	17.38%
Transportation and Warehousing, Utilities	72	6.13%
Information	7	0.60%
Finance and Insurance, and Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	22	1.87%
Professional, Scientific, and Management, and Administrative and Waste Management Services	22	1.87%
Educational Services, and Health Care and Social Assistance	257	21.89%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation, and Accommodation and Food Services	50	4.26%
Other Services, except Public Administration	66	5.62%
Public Administration	245	20.87%
Total	1,174	100%
Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2018)		

Employment by Occupation Civilian Employed population 16 years and over		
Occupation	No. Persons	% Lawrence
Management, Business, Science, and Arts	259	22.06%
Service	261	22.23%
Sales and Office	324	27.60%
Natural Resources, Construction and Maintenance	190	16.18%
Production, Transportation & Material Moving	140	11.93%
Total	1,174	100%
Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2018)		

Median Income for Households and Families		
	Households	Families
Maurice River Township	\$73,214	\$80,656
Cumberland County	\$52,593	\$63,274
New Jersey	\$76,475	\$94,337
Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates 2018		

Percent Distribution Persons and Families below Poverty Level				
	All Persons Below Poverty Line	Persons Age 18+ Below the Poverty Line	Persons Age 65 + Below the Poverty Line	Families Below Poverty Line
Maurice River Township	4.2%	2.0%	3.8%	6.3%
Cumberland County	17.6%	10.9%	1.5%	12.9%
New Jersey	10.7%	9.4%	8.2%	7.9%
Source: American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2018)				

Summary of Key Characteristics

- The Township is 95 square miles, the largest municipality in Cumberland County.
- 69% of the Township is located in the Pinelands.
- Over 43% of the Township's land area is publicly owned and tax exempt.
- Only 2.3% of the total assessed value in the Township is attributable to Commercial/Industrial Development.
- 80% of the Assessed Value is attributed to residential.
- Tax Exempt parcels account for a 35% additional potential to the Township's Assessed Value.
- Within the Pinelands areas only 17% of the total land area is located in an approved development area.
- 41% of the total land area is State owned Open-Space.
- 39% of the Township is Woodland.
- 75% of the Township is zoned for public use, conservation or limited growth.
- 4% of the Township is zoned for commercial/industrial development.
- The Township contains four CAFRA Centers, accounting for 3.8% of the total land area in the Township. The four centers are as follows:
 - Port Elizabeth/Bricksboro – 205 acres {49 dwelling units} **Split with Pinelands Village**
 - Dorchester/Leesburg – 1,410 acres/ 2.2 sq. miles {407 dwelling units and 200 jobs – 997 persons est.}
 - Heislerville – 584 acres/0.91 sq. miles {149 dwelling units}
 - Delmont – 125 acres {49 dwelling units} **Split with Pinelands Village**
- More than half of the Township's population as reported in the 2000 Census were from two prisons; Bayside (2,304 prisoners) and Southern State (1,946 prisoners). This accounted for 61% of the total population in 2000.
- The current population is inaccurately reflected with the inclusion of the prison population. This impacts projections prepared by State agencies.
- The actual population in the Township is declining, with a 10.8% decline from 2010 through 2020.

Status of Planning

Master Planning

The Township has undertaken the following planning activities since the adoption of their 2000 Master Plan:

- 2006 Master Plan Reexamination Report focused on the possibility of encouraging various active recreation activities throughout the Township. The report recommended several revisions to the existing Master Plan language to strengthen the concerns relative to economic development, protecting the natural resources and encouraging active recreation.
- 2012 Master Plan Reexamination Report and Update with 2013 Amendment focused on the Pinelands Mandatory Clustering Program.
- In the Township Master Plan Reports, the concerns focused on stimulating economic development opportunities while maintaining the community character. There was also recognition of the vast natural resources throughout the Township and the need to maintain these areas. The balancing of economic development with the preservation of the natural features was noted as a challenge, and continues to be a challenge today.
- 2014 Open Space and Recreation Master Plan focused on identifying the Townships natural areas as identified in the 2000 Master Plan and also added the additional 3 goals:
 - Provide recreational opportunities for all areas of the Township whether passive or active.
 - Expand the existing recreational parks and facilities where appropriate to meet the needs of the community.
 - Develop new and improve upon the existing public access points to the waterways in the Township.
- 2015 Environmental Resource Inventory Update to the 2001 Environmental Resource Inventory. This document updated the maps and data from the 2001 report to provide a clearer picture of the conditions in the Township.

Redevelopment and Rehabilitation Areas

The Township has created the following Redevelopment and Rehabilitation Areas:

Redevelopment / Rehabilitation Area	Properties	Street Location	Date Designation Approved	Date Redevelopment Plan Approved
Ackley Garage Redevelopment	Block 222, Lot 25	Route 47 & Yawp Shore Drive	September 4, 2013	March 20, 2014
Sapello Foundry Redevelopment	Block 230, Lot 30	Broadway /Port Elizabeth	September 4, 2013	September 13, 2014
Rehabilitation	Block 257, Lot 1	Route 347 & Route 47	April 17, 2017	Not Adopted
Town Wide Rehabilitation	Entire Township	Entire Township	June 21, 2018	November 15, 2018

COMMUNITY VISION AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Vision Statement

To protect and preserve our natural and historic heritage while permitting properly controlled residential and economic development in keeping with our village and maritime character and in balance with the Township's sensitive environmental issues.

Public Meetings

Maurice River Township has not conducted a formal visioning workshop or process. The Township is requesting that such a visioning process be completed as part of its Action Plan.

RECENT AND UPCOMING DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Over the past several years the Township has seen very limited development applications. The majority of the applications related to renewals of existing sand mining operations. In terms of new development activities through Land Use Board approvals, the Township has approved the following projects:

Owner/Name	Block/Lot	Site Location	Project Description	Year Approved
Nicole Kristie	274/1-4	Front Street	Solar	2016
Ocean Fuel	250/20	Route 47	Retail / Adding 2 Uhaul Parking Stalls	2016
L&T Kennels	120/52	Port Elizabeth/Cumberland Road	Service	2017
Tri-County Sportsman Motorcycle Club	124/2	Weatherby Road	Service / Meeting Space	2019
Dollar General	239/15	Route 47	Retail	2019

The Township has been working with the owners of the property located along River Road to permit a shipbuilding/vessel maintenance and marine fabrication facility. Applications for approval were submitted in 2020, however they are pending outside agency reviews before the Land Use Board can take action on the development plans.

STATEMENT OF PLANNING COORDINATION

The Township of Maurice River has worked closely with various agencies to advance the planning efforts in the Community. The following is a representation of the various agencies and planning efforts the Township has coordinate with since 2013, the list is not an exhaustive list, just a representation of the larger planning efforts:

- Ensuring development and documents are consistent with the Pinelands Commission for those areas governed by the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan.
- Coordinating with Cumberland County through their numerous planning efforts related to economic development, future development patterns, transportation, open space and recreation and Strategic Planning for the County.
- Coordinating with NJDEP to stabilize the East Point Shoreline.
- Coordinating with NJDEP for the restoration of the Matt's Landing Dike.
- Coordinating with NJDEP to repair/replace the Bricksboro Bulkhead.
- Coordinating with the Jacques Cousteau National Estuarine Research Reserve in partnership with New Jersey Future to prepare the Township "Getting to Resilience" Recommendations Report in 2014.
- Coordinating with the Cumberland County Delaware Bayshore to prepare the Bayshore Recovery Plan in 2013.

STATE, FEDERAL AND OTHER PROGRAMS, GRANTS AND CAPITAL PROJECTS

The Township has received the following grants since 2013:

Municipal Aid

- 2013 NJDOT Municipal Aid Grant for the reconstruction of Estell Manor Road (\$188,000)
- 2016 NJDOT Municipal Aid Grant for the reconstruction of Estell Manor Road – Phase III (\$181,000)
- 2018 NJDOT Municipal Aid Grant for the reconstruction of Newell Road (\$233,000)
- 2019 NJDOT Municipal Aid Grant for the reconstruction of Newell Road – Phase II (\$224,679)
- 2020 NJDOT Municipal Aid Grant for the reconstruction of Fox Street and School Access Drive (\$188,530)
- 2021 NJDOT Municipal Aid Grant for the reconstruction of Fox Street and School Access Drive – Phase II (\$151,706)
- 2022 NJDOT Municipal Aid Grant for the reconstruction of Estell Manor Road – Phase IV (\$240,000)

SEARCH Grant

- 2014 USDA SEARCH Grant for the Study of Wastewater Treatment Alternatives for Port Elizabeth (\$30,000)
- 2014 USDA SEARCH Grant for the Study of Wastewater Treatment Alternatives for Leesburg and Dorchester (\$30,000)

Municipal Alliance Grant

- Municipal Alliance 2017 - \$13,200
- Municipal Alliance 2018 - \$13,200
- Municipal Alliance 2019 - \$13,200
- Municipal Alliance 2020 - \$4,647
- Municipal Alliance 2021 - \$5,954

Clean Communities Grant

- Clean Communities 2017 - \$15,003.47
- Clean Communities 2018 - \$14,263.38
- Clean Communities 2019 - \$15,923.28
- Clean Communities 2020 - \$14,355.49
- Clean Communities 2021 - \$15,267.63

SUSTAINABILITY/RESILIENCY STATEMENT

The Township of Maurice River has approximately 6 miles of coastline along the Delaware Bay and an additional 12 miles of frontage along the Maurice River. Much of the coastal areas are at elevations that are at or near sea level and many of the low-lying areas are impacted by high groundwater conditions. This is especially prevalent in the southern part of the Township. Township officials have been very active in their efforts enhance coastal resiliency and protect the social, economic and environmental viability that forms the community of Maurice River.

Tidal inundation in portions of the Township is an issue residents have had to deal with since the Town's inception in the 1700's. Major coastal storms events, such as what occurred during Super Storm Sandy in 2012, have created tidal flooding in areas adjacent to the tidal marshes. Just as impactful have been the flood events that have occurred during storms impacted by the lunar cycle. Storms with a strong wind out of the south have also created upstream flooding along the river through the stacking of high tides resulting in higher water levels. Storms that would be considered to have little impact in the region can be more significant to the communities along the river. If sea level rise is to occur, it can be anticipated that the areas of inundation will increase.

Achieving resiliency to environmental threats has not only long been a goal, but a necessity, as a means to the survival for Maurice River Township. The majority of the population of the Township is grouped into smaller, non-incorporated villages along the coast. These villages evolved accessory to and in support of the historic commerce on the Maurice River dominated by ship building and commercial shellfishing. Providing resiliency for the Township requires preserving the social identity of these villages.

A significant component to the viability of Maurice River Township is the completion of necessary improvements along the river. Over the past decade the Township has been working with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection and the United States Army Corps of Engineers to perform dredging at the mouth of the Maurice River and at a portion of the river know as Basket Flats. Army Corps work is also to include the creation of marine structure and the reestablishment of bends in the river that have been eliminated over time and through storm events. These bends served as natural breakwaters that protected the villages located up-river. Their erosion changed the hydraulic dynamic which brought wave-action impact inland. Heislerville is protected by a dike system at Matts Landing. This dike historically had a marshland in front of it. As the lower bends in the river disappeared, the marshland turned to open water. Portions of this dike, as well as Matts Landing Road itself, were washed away during Super Storm Sandy. Emergency repairs to both of these structures were subsequently damaged in a follow up storm a month later and had to repaired a second time. Had the river dredging and structure improvements been implemented in advance of Sandy, the wave action on the dike would not have been severe.

Proposed Army Corps dredging of the Maurice River will aid in the economic sustainability of the Township. Improvement to the navigable channel will ensure access for deep water vessels that presently use the river. Marine repair of larger vessels is a viable industry at several locations along the river. Staging and land operations for New Jersey's first off-shore wind farm occurs along the river in the Leesburg section of the Township. Consistent with the Town's long history of baymen, the deep water draft supports the passage of commercial vessels for fishing and shellfish harvesting.

Maurice River Township has been an active partner in multiple efforts to enhance its coastal resiliency. The township has partnered with both the NJDEP Coastal Bureau and the Army Corps for improvements of the beachfront at Thompson Beach to protect the hermit crabs, provide gabion revetment protection along Bay Avenue in East Point and provide significant improvements to the Matts Landing dike. Work is currently in progress for the construction of shore protection at the historic East Point Lighthouse. The Township has recently completed improvements to the shore protection structure at the end of Bay Avenue at East Point.

Township officials have been active in protecting low lying areas through maintenance and structural improvements to reduce impacts of flooding. Recent improvements in the hamlet of Bricksboro include the reconstruction of a bulkhead along

the river to stop bank erosion and inland flooding of the neighborhood and the replacement of stormwater outflow pipes to ensure positive discharge.

Township officials have been active in the planning of coastal resiliency measures. The current mayor is Chairman of the Bayshore Council that meets bi-monthly to discuss issues of resiliency and economic stability in the Delaware bayshore. The Town is currently undergoing its five year update of its FEMA emergency management plan. This plan identifies short and long-term goals for emergency management, including coastal resiliency measures.

The Township has an Office of Emergency Management, housed in a building located between Town Hall and Public Works. OEM has emergency equipment used in flood rescue. Emergency power is provided at the Leesburg Fire Department to provide power to the OEM and Public Works facility to maintain emergency operations fully functional during power outages. Emergency power is also provided at Town Hall in the Senior Center to facilitate the staging and gathering supplies for the residents during a natural disaster.

Route 47 is a reverse lane evacuation route for Cape May County. Resiliency planning is being discussed to enhance the viability of this route to account for the impacts of climate change.

Coastal resiliency policy is being supported through the municipal zoning ordinance. Development is restricted in flood hazard and other environmentally sensitive areas. Applicants must demonstrate that development can accommodate subsurface sewage disposal as part of the approval process.

As Federal and State efforts have increased the available information relative to the potentials of sea level rise, Maurice River Township will endeavor to complete a vulnerability analysis including an evaluation of surge vulnerability through the incorporation of SLOSH mapping to determine potential impacts of various category storm events and update resiliency strategies to abate those impacts. The Township will continue to pursue grant opportunities that would enhance the Town's overall resiliency.

CONSISTENCY SECTION

Local and Regional Planning

The Township has adopted various Master Plan Reports with the latest Reexamination from 2012. The following Master Plan goals and objectives guide the municipality and are consistent with both the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan in the Pinelands areas and with the New Jersey State Planning goals and objectives.

Economic Development Goal - Stimulate locally oriented economic development opportunities. The Master Plan encourages creating opportunities for small, locally owned and owner operated business to provide economic diversity in the Township. The Township believes in supporting its small rural community and resources which is further demonstrated in the Master Plan's objectives related to economic development.

1. Use the Township's natural and cultural resources as a basis for sustainable economic development opportunities such as ecotourism.
2. Make the Township a visitor destination, using small town rural atmosphere and natural resources such as the Pinelands and Maurice River as attractions.
3. Tap the shore traffic passing through the Township on state highways as a market for local business.
4. Identify and make use of local economic benefits that can be derived from environmental protection and community development efforts.
5. Have Township residents make full use of employment and business opportunities generated by the prison facilities located within the Township.
6. Require sand mine property to be maintained as a usable and productive land resource for post-mining land uses.

Community Development Goal - maintain and enhance the small-town atmosphere of the existing communities within the Township. Maurice River consists of several small towns and villages surrounded by large rural areas. The Township has created objectives to enhance the towns and villages and the unique rural areas.

1. Promote the cultural resources and historical heritage of the Township.
2. Encourage rehabilitation and restoration of vacant and underutilized buildings and properties.
3. Promote civic pride in maintaining a clean community image.
4. Require new development to be architecturally compatible with the surrounding community.
5. Establish a local forum to address historical and cultural issues.

Housing Goal - provide housing opportunities in keeping with the existing community character. The Township's housing stock is primarily single-family, owner-occupied. There has been relatively small housing growth since the 1970's. The Township has created objectives to enhance their housing stock.

1. Renovate existing substandard housing stock.
2. Identify zoning districts where new construction can meet affordable housing requirements.
3. Provide site and design standards for new housing to be constructed compatible with the community character.
4. Continue the trend for the majority of new housing to be individual, owner-occupied single-family dwellings.
5. Return abandoned houses to the available housing stock.
6. To serve the multi-family rental market, the conversion of large dwellings should be considered before new rental complexes are constructed.

Natural Resource Conservation - prevent the environmental degradation and to preserve open space, wildlife habitat, environmental quality and natural resources. The Township is rich with a diversity of natural environments. These include the Delaware Bayshore, the coastal marshes, the Wild and Scenic Maurice River and its tributaries, and the Pinelands forests. The majority of the Township is undeveloped. Recognizing the unique features and habitats in the community the following objectives have been created.

1. Promote local pride in, and understanding of, the natural events such as horseshoe crab spawning and the shorebird migration that occur within the Township.
2. Allow managed public access for viewing natural events.
3. Use the benefits of ecotourism to offset the impacts of environmental regulations on the community.
4. Protect wetlands, woodlands, stream corridors and beach areas from development.
5. Protect wildlife habitat.
6. Require environmental controls on development to limit the impacts of land clearing and grading, septic systems and stormwater runoff and to conserve water.
7. Buffer environmentally sensitive areas from development.

Land Use and Development Patterns - guide future land use and development to remain compatible with the rural small-town atmospheres to prevent use of the Township. The Township conflicts between existing and new development and the natural environment. These goals are furthered with the land use objectives.

1. Maintain the existing development pattern of primarily forest land, open space and other low intensity uses east of Route 47.
2. Encourage most future commercial, business and residential developments to locate in the existing towns and villages along Route 47, Route 49 and Mays Landing Road.

3. Between the Maurice River and Route 47, from Port Elizabeth south to Delmont, encourage natural resource oriented recreational and visitor facilities.
4. Encourage new business and commercial development along “old” Route 47 to attract and serve customers from the shore traffic using Route 347.

Transportation - manage the impacts of the shore traffic on the roads and communities within the Township. The Township experiences seasonal shore traffic along Route 47 and 347. The heavy traffic volumes can cause disruptions to the local community but also provide opportunities to local businesses. The Township has created objectives to balance the impacts and benefits from the high volume of seasonal traffic.

1. Encourage alternatives to Route 47 and Route 55 for shore bound traffic to relieve congestion around Port Elizabeth and Bricksboro.
2. Improve access to Route 55 and Route 347 for business opportunities along “old” Route 47.
3. Obtain at least a minimum level of transit service for the Township, such as a NJ Transit bus route with stops along Route 47 in the Township, or an areawide para-transit service.
4. Participate in discussions of options and alternatives to the southern completion of Route 55 into Cape May County.
5. Require transportation improvements to be sensitive to the existing community settings.

State Plan – Goals, Policies and Indicators

Goal #1: Revitalize the State’s Cities and Towns

The Township has historically maintained all development within their Village Centers. The Township enters this process with the intention of maintaining the historic development patterns and protecting the existing areas of development. Residential development in the Township is primarily clustered in the Villages of Milmay, Cumberland, Delmont, Heislerville, Leesburg, Dorchester, Bricksboro and Port Elizabeth. Many of these villages predated the incorporation of Maurice River, dating back to the 1600’s. Each of these Villages formed for different reasons related to local commerce on and proximity to the waterways.

Goal #2: Conserve the State’s Natural Resources and Systems

The Township has more than 50% of their land area as preserved open space. The Township takes the preservation of the environment as an integral part of its Planning Policies. Less than 2% of the land area is utilized for non-residential purposes and only 9% is residential. The Township contains portions of four designated Wild and Scenic rivers; the Maurice River, the Menantico River, the Manumuskin River, and the Muskee Creek.

Goal #3: Promote Beneficial Economic Growth, Development and Renewal for all Residents of New Jersey

Focusing on the Township's development areas the Township has continued to promote economic development in areas consistent with their designated centers. The Township is currently working to create a Node along the Maurice River to recognize and promote the historic shipbuilding and maritime industries. Shipbuilding was a predominate industry in the Dorcheseter and Leesburg areas where the A.J. Meerwald (the State Ship of New Jersey) was constructed. Today the shipbuilding yards have left with few remnants remaining such as Yank Marine in Dorchester and Allens Steel in Leesburg.

Goal #4: Protect the Environment, Prevent and Clean up Pollution

The majority of the Township is forested land followed by significant areas of wetlands and environmental constraints. The primary land use in the Township is open space preservation efforts of State and Non-profit agencies. Over 30,000 acres are permanently preserved through various agencies as Wildlife Management Areas, State Parks and Preserves. This accounts for approximately 50% of the Township land area.

Goal #5: Provide Adequate Public Facilities and Services at a Reasonable Cost

The Township has various recreation facilities located throughout the Community. The municipal building includes meeting halls and gathering areas. The Township also maintains the Senior Center. The Township is a small community with limited tax ratables and growth opportunities. The Township utilizes State funding to help offset the costs to the community where possible.

Goal #6: Provide Adequate Housing at a Reasonable Cost

The Township is limited in its ability to provide new housing opportunities given the environmental and regulatory restrictions. The Township contains just over 1,200 housing units with a median housing value of \$158,400.

Goal #7: Preserve and Enhance Areas with Historic, Cultural, Scenic, Open Space and Recreational Value

The Township has looked to encourage eco-tourism and preservation of its natural resources. The areas in the Township provide opportunities for birding, fishing, hiking, bicycling, canoe and kayak areas, scenic vistas and much more. With all of these natural resources the Township has worked to provide connections throughout the area with bike paths, walkways and trail systems. The Township contains part of the Bayshore Heritage Byway traveling down Main Street onto River Road and spurs to the East Point Lighthouse. The Township is also working to implement the recommended Rails to Trails segments from the Cumberland County Plan.

Goal #8: Ensure Sound and Integrated Planning and Implementation Statewide

The Township works with various State and County agencies and groups to protect its natural resources and promote appropriate economic development opportunities. This is clear throughout this document and all of the activities and actions that have occurred over the years in this small community.

State Plan – Center Criteria and Policies

The Township entered the Center Designation process and had their identified centers approved as part of the process. Recognizing the efforts that went into the State Plan to identify areas of historical development, the Township strives to maintain these areas as they are vital to the future of Maurice River Township. There exist very limited opportunities for development but for in these identified centers. These Centers include historic developments that date back to the 1600's and account for ONLY 3.8% of the total land area in the Township. There also exists the Mauricetown Station Hamlet, which was also approved by the State Planning Commission on February 2, 2000. The Township does not seek to expand these areas, but to maintain the existing development and opportunities for future economic and housing development consistent with the Center's policies and criteria.

- Port Elizabeth-Bricksboro Village Center – Approved February 2, 2000 – 205 acres {49 dwelling units} **Split with Pinelands Village**
- Dorchester-Leesburg Village Center - Approved February 2, 2000 - – 1,410 acres/ 2.2 sq. miles {407 dwelling units and 200 jobs – 997 persons est.}
- Heislerville Village Center - Approved February 2, 2000 - 584 acres/0.91 sq. miles {149 dwelling units}
- Delmont Village Center - Approved February 2, 2000 - – 125 acres {49 dwelling units} **Split with Pinelands Village**

The Township has struggled to maintain the water related industries including shipbuilding and fishing that used to thrive in the area. For that reason and in recognition of the local industry, the Township desires to work with the State Planning Agency to develop a Node along the Maurice River, encompassing the remaining ship building and maritime industries.

State Plan – Planning Area Policy Objectives

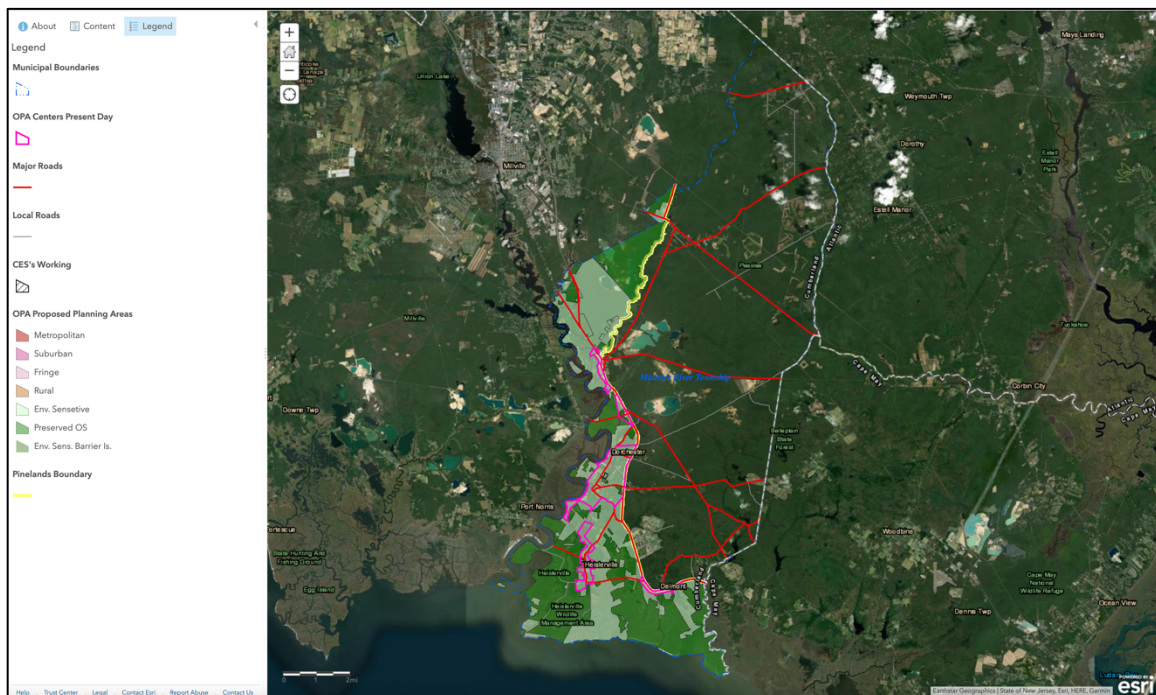
The majority of the Township is governed by the New Jersey Pinelands Commission. The areas west of Route 47 are subject to the New Jersey State Plan and NJDEP regulations. The Township contains only one State Planning Area, Environmentally Sensitive (PA5). The balance is either within a Designated Village or Hamlet as identified above, or is Preserved Open Space.

State Planning Area PA5 is intended to

- protect the environmental resources through the protection of large contiguous areas of land;
- accommodate growth in Centers;
- protect the character of existing stable communities;
- confine programmed sewers and public water services to Centers; and
- revitalize cities and towns.

The Township of Maurice River has embodied the intent of the PA5 areas through its local zoning and planning efforts. Specifically, by participating in the Centers Designation process under the State Plan in 2000, the Township encouraged development in all identified and designated Centers. The Township also worked with many State and County agencies and Environmental Protection groups to preserve and protect their natural resources along the Delaware River.

The map below shows the Township boundaries, State Planning Areas and existing Centers.



Conclusion

There are many unique and environmentally sensitive areas in the Township rich with history, scenic vistas and natural and environmental resources. The Township has strived to protect and preserve the valuable areas within its borders. But in order to sustain the community and to provide for the residents and businesses, the Township needs to maintain their historic village centers. There are very limited opportunities for new housing and commerce. The Township does not ask to expand beyond what they have historically seen as development areas. The Township also recognizes that some of these areas may in fact have environmental restrictions which will be addressed through permitting. But with only 3.8% of their TOTAL LAND AREA in historically designated Village Centers, it is vitally important that these areas be maintained for the betterment of the entire Township.

Appendix 1

Plan Endorsement Advisory Committee Resolution